札幌学院大学人文学会紀要（2018）第104号　41－53

《論　文》

Cooperative development and Japanese graduate-school teachers: a case analysis

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Abstract
In order to propose a model to develop a group of teachers and students, I aim to explore the approach to teaching & learning known as cooperative learning and design my own model–henceforth referred to as variant - of the cooperative learning approach. The particular context that inspired the development of this variant is based on my experience in joining a small seminar-style study group in a Japanese university context. I will describe how this proposed variant can potentially be used to support the teachers' professional training in assisting their students to develop the use English for academic life. I will then expand on this variant's transfer potential for other similar contexts.

Group background

The group dynamics and background described here are typically found in most Japanese graduate schools. The group conducts weekly seminar–style sessions that are usually attended by one or two teachers, some graduate students, and they are sometimes joined by an assistant. The sessions take place for students to report their progress and to receive feedback from teachers. In some cases, the teachers also require students to undertake specific background reading.

For each seminar, the students update the teachers and the rest of the group about their progress with their study and research. Teachers then lead a group discussion and provide students with feedback. The preparation for each seminar requires students to summarise the content of their report, in turns. In addition, students are encouraged to use English at this stage. Discussion is carried out in their native Japanese language.

Very often, however, the use of English by students is limited to the task of writing and presenting the summary of their report. The summaries written in English, which they read aloud, are often brief. In some cases, students do not complete the task. In most other

cases, students use English only for writing a brief report summary and reading it aloud. Once this task is fulfilled, the group switches back to Japanese for question and answer, and discussion.

The teachers' and students' fields of study are omitted in this paper; and focus is placed exclusively in the relevant aspects, namely 1) the social context in a seminar-style group with teachers, assistants and graduate students whose first language is Japanese, 2) the use of language in the seminar classes, and 3) the group limitation (English-language ability).

Context and needs

The particular problem within this group, which is also found in many similar settings in Japanese universities' graduate courses, lies in the generally unsuccessful attempts by the teachers to establish a way forward for their students to incorporate the use of English in their academic lives.

In spite of the teachers' attempts, and the fact that publishing their research (a task that requires extensive reading and in-depth understanding of English-written texts, and which graduate students are made aware of) is a requirement for graduation, the students' general use of English remains low. The expectations teachers have with regards to use of English in the seminars and in the course do not match the students' current output and expectations; from the teachers' perspective, the students need to be helped to achieve this in order to cope with the requirements established by the university, but in many cases, the teachers themselves may not feel they should - or are even able to-do this. In other words, although students and teachers are aware of the English-language requirements, the task currently in place does not seem to reflect or convey the importance (or urgency) of said requirements.

Choosing to address the English-language needs of the group of students would most likely entail the involvement of an external professional in education or language education to work with the students aiming to improve their English competence. Unfortunately, however, the feasibility of this approach is questionable, mostly due to factors such as students' availability, and the extra resources that are needed as a result of having such a person available weekly, namely time, effort, and money. In addition, this is likely to be a short-term solution, and it would not prevent the problem from recurring with a new group of students.

Based on the particularities listed above, I have chosen to place the focus on the teachers:

the development aspect of this study aims to work with and develop teachers' abilities as educators, especially with regards to language learning (since this relates to one of the main problems found within the group) ; moreover, for the purpose of this study, a strategy that can be executed within a pre-established timeframe was chosen.

Choosing an approach

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."-English proverb

In the section above I suggested a strategy that focuses on the development of the teachers as educators, with special emphasis on raising their awareness of language learning and study skills, and that this strategy should be implemented within a limited, pre-established timeframe. Ideally, once the timeframe is expired, the responsibility for self-development will be handed over to the teachers, so that they are able to continue their CPD as educators through self development and peer development.

In other words, the premise of this strategy should be to offer initial assistance to teachers, to enable them to develop themselves in order to understand the problem, to find solutions, to work together and ultimately apply the knowledge not only to this particular group, but also to any group or class they are responsible for. Therefore, the strategy should attempt to provide a feasible solution for this teacher-development need.

With the above in mind, I opted for an exploration of the concepts underpinning collaborative-learning and cooperative-learning approaches. Cooperative learning has been extensively researched in several educational & training settings. It is considered "one of the success stories of both psychology and education", largely because of the closeness between theory, research, and practice. (Johnson and Johnson, 2008). Developing a variant of a collaborative-or cooperative-learning approach would enable the teachers to work together in finding answers for their questions, and through this developmental process, they would also be able to employ their own variations of collaborative or cooperative approaches to language development with their own students. This reflects Tessa Woodward's (2003) notion of loop input.

Collaborative Learning and Cooperative Learning - overview

"To increase faculty members' effectiveness, the existing competitive/individualistic college

structure must be restructured to a cooperative, team-based college structure." (Johnson et al, 1991).

Cooperative learning and Collaborative learning are two terms often used interchangeably; however, as CL1 (n.d.) points out, practitioners prefer to make a distinction between the two. The definition of either varies according to the author. Johnson et al (1991) defines cooperative learning as small groups that allow students to work together to maximise their own learning. Studygs (n.d.) uses the terms to refer to the same approach: "where members support and rely on each other to achieve an agreed-upon goal", while Thirteen (n.d.) differentiates between the two terms: collaborative learning is a method where students work together on a shared assignment, and cooperative learning (which is the primary focus of the authors' model) is defined as a branch of collaborative learning, where groups are smaller and activities are structured, students work as a team, and are both individually and collectively accountable for their work. Rockwood (1995) cited by CL1 (n.d.) characterises cooperative learning as an approach where "the instructor is the center of authority in the class, with group tasks usually more closed-ended and often having specific answers", whereas with collaborative learning "the instructor abdicates his or her authority and empowers the small groups who are often given more open-ended, complex tasks".

Benefits

Benefits of cooperative learning are amply described in the literature. Authors maintain that cooperative learning can:

- Enhance productivity and student achievement (Slavin, 1991; Dornyei, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 2008).
- Promote better relationship and equality between the people involved (Slavin, 1991; Edge, 1992; Dornyei, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 2008; Wichadee & Suwantarathip, 2010; Ning, 2011; Er & Bengü, 2014).
- Result in greater psychological health and reduce student anxiety through the promotion of behaviours like support, encouragement and appraisal (Thirteen, n.d.; Johnson & Johnson, 2008; Wichadee & Suwantarathip, 2010)
- Raise awareness of individual differences, develop trust, respect and tolerance, move people close together and develop their higher order thinking skills (Johnson & Johnson, 2008; Wichadee & Suwantarathip, 2010; Er & Bengü, 2014)

- Produce a group structure that promotes learner motivation and learning (Slavin, 1991; Dornyei, 1997; Thirteen, n.d.; Johnson & Johnson, 2003).
- Promote feelings of responsibility, commitment and accountability among students (Johnson & Johnson, 2008).
- Reinforce feelings of mutual trust, acceptance and respect (Thirteen, n.d.; Edge, 1992; Johnson & Johnson, 2008; Er & Bengü, 2014).

Necessary conditions

For cooperative learning to occur, there are a number of conditions to be met. According to authors, teacher behaviour should include:

- Creating "a low stress, friendly and supportive learning environment" (Wichadee & Suwantarathip, 2010).
- Basing their practices on theory validated by research in order to use cooperative learning effectively (Shachar, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 2008).
- Ensuring that all parties involved are able to know and trust each other, communicate accurately and unambiguously, accept and support each other, and to resolve conflicts constructively (Thirteen, n.d.; Johnson & Johnson, 2008).
- Emphasising community-building, open-communicative behaviours, and reciprocal-helping relationships (Johnson & Johnson, 1994).
- Being aware of the importance and relevance of team playing, and its relationship with cooperative learning and success (Thirteen, n.d.)
- Promoting a situation where learners feel safe, but also challenged, in groups small enough where monitoring is constant and reflection on progress is encouraged (Thirteen, n.d.) .
- Ensuring all learners work together in clear, relevant and meaningful tasks (Thirteen, n.d.; Johnson & Johnson, 1994).
- Building a relationship of respect, empathy and honesty (Edge, 1992).

Considerations

There are also a number of considerations to be borne in mind in cooperative learning approaches. In spite of the fact that most problems related to cooperative learning occur only within a specific, isolated situation, teachers should be prepared to deal with potential

problems. Some of the most commonly encountered possible obstacles of problems are:

- Teacher lack of preparation and/or experience: teacher preparedness is a key element for cooperative learning to work (Shachar, 2003).
- Learners' individual characteristics, differences, personality traits and attitudes towards learning cooperatively (Er & Bengü, 2014). Lansey (1994) describes a hypothetical situation called 'moral illiteracy', which is when people "have not developed the skills necessary for self-discovery".
- Maintaining group harmony: this could cause people to be reluctant to disagree with certain propositions, or to say what they honestly think, out of concerns that this would disrupt the group's harmony (Lansey, 1994).
- The fact that cooperative learning goes against more traditional classroom instruction (i.e. whole class instruction) (Shachar, 2003).
- The cultural characteristics of the context they are in (Ning, 2011).
- The class' situation, including materials and resources available, the class' size, time limitations (Ning, 2011).
- Grouping: it is debated whether groups should mix students with different levels of proficiency, or if groups should comprise learners of similar levels (Thirteen, n.d.; Shachar, 2003). Thirteen (n.d.) suggests that most teachers should "make choices based on their objectives."

Practical characteristics of three discrete models of cooperative learning

Based on the benefits, necessary conditions, and considerations described above, a number of models for the implementation of cooperative learning have emerged, most with a great many elements in common. I have therefore chosen three models for this research, my selection criteria being a) the availability of primary sources, and b) the significant differential in detail between them. The three models are:

- Thirteen's online guide to using cooperative groups in a classroom (Thirteen, n.d.) ;
- Edge's Cooperative Development framework (Edge, 1992) ;
- Ning's model for employing cooperative learning in tertiary ELT (Ning 2010).

I will present an overview of the key characteristics and implementation steps in each one of them, and then explore these elements to devise my own variant that will address the employment of cooperative learning in my specific context.

Thirteen's online guide to using cooperative groups in a classroom

This is a five-step model for classroom use, with a group of students, led by a teacher.

- Step 1: Form good questions. These questions should work from the known to the unknown, allow for different student roles, encourage queries, and motivate students to work together and find the answer.
- Step 2: Identify goals. Goals must be clear and relevant. The authors suggest a "learners will…" format for setting up goals. They discourage the use of vague words such as 'know', 'understand', or 'appreciate', and suggest words such as 'list', 'demonstrate', or 'compare' instead.
- Step 3: Create rubrics. These are a list of objectives that will help students to understand what is required and guide them to work towards the answer for the question. A rubric also helps the teacher mark the students' work.
- Step 4: Assign a specific assessment task. The authors suggest a few examples of assessment, such as having groups to draft a report, or to have them sit a test; details of an assessment task will ultimately depend on the particularities of each situation.
- Step 5: Reflect to adjust. Reflection is done through looking back over the small-group sessions and it ensures that teachers and students create the habit of reflecting on group progress and making adjustments to improve outcome. The authors suggest a number of example questions about content, the process, attitude, habits and areas for improvement.

Edge's Cooperative Development framework

Edge's suggested model focuses on a pair-based form of self-development, where "two people cooperate for an agreed period in order to allow one person to work on his or her (self-) development." One person is the Speaker, with the other being the Understander. The latter makes every effort to comprehend the ideas voiced by the former, thus assisting their development.

The model's modus operandi consists of a series of interaction techniques, which he calls 'abilities'. He describes a sequence of nine abilities, although he states that this order can be modified to suit other settings. He emphasises that, although the steps relate largely to talk, "the purpose of development is action." The nine abilities consciously operate according to the qualities of *respect, empathy* and *honesty*, and work exclusively in the Speaker's frame

of reference. They are presented as follows:

- Attending: this is the ability to "make a Speaker feel actively and supportively listened to", and it relates to the quality of mutual respect.
- Reflecting: this is when the Understander reflects back the Speaker's ideas, as well as his or her attitudes (which can turn out to be more important than the plain words) so that the latter is able to gain a clear view of them.
- Focusing: depending on the course of the session, the Understander may ask the Speaker a question in order to elicit a focus from the latter or to provide one directly.
- Thematizing: the Understander may choose to bring together two separate points made by the Speaker and check whether there is a connection between them. This can cause frustration and moments of silence; these, however, are considered to be positive signs of development.
- Challenging: this contrasts with Thematising; the Understander brings together two statements that may appear contradictory or otherwise mutually exclusive.
- Disclosing: the Understander may choose to disclose their own experience "only to the extent that it may be useful to clarify exactly what the Speaker is trying to say." This can be done, for instance, through the offering of a personal experience or an emotion.
- Goal-setting: the Speaker decides on a course of action based on the session's outcomes and his or her self-development needs. This is done through keeping goals small. These may start as broadly-conceived goals, which will be narrowed down to more specific and feasible actions.
- Trailing: "once a goal has been set up, the work of the Speaker and Understander turns to a detailed, step-by-step blueprint for implementation." The Speaker makes sure all steps have been talked through and are coherent.
- Planning: the final stage of the interaction. The Speaker and Understander come out of their roles and discuss further actions and negotiate when the pair will meet again.

Ning's model for employing cooperative learning in tertiary ELT

This comprises three aspects of teaching: *team formation, technique adaptation,* and *course evaluation.*

1. Team formation-considers five factors:

- Size: the number of members in each group, usually determined by the teacher.
- Selection: team members can be selected by the teachers, the students, or randomly.

・Composition: adjustments may be made to ensure heterogeneity, or homogeneity, according to the teacher's judgement and the class needs.
・Duration: determining how long the groups will work together, and the length of the course. Ning stresses that stable, long-term learning teams benefit learning and students' attitudes.
・Organisation: the author suggests three steps "to enhance team cooperation and cohesion": giving the team a name; assigning members a stable code; and electing one willing member as the team's captain.

2. Technique adaptation: involves three sequential components, adapted by Ning from Slavin's Student-Team-Achievement-Division to suit larger classes with limited teaching hours. The three sequential components are:

・Class presentation: this consists of short whole-class teaching input to present the topic, the tasks and other instructions/requirements, such as a worksheet or a rubric. It is delivered by the teacher and serves as a starting point for teamwork and team assessment that follows.
・Structured teamwork: focusing on "peer interaction and meaningful negotiation", the teams work together to complete the task. Ning suggests randomly choosing the team and the code to present, so as to ensure all individuals become responsible and accountable for team success.
・Team assessment: this includes individual, peer, and teacher assessment. First, teams assess presentations according to pre-defined criteria. The teacher also assesses the presenting teams, pointing out their presentations' strengths and weaknesses. The teacher then refers to the teams' assessment to decide on each team's grade. These grades are then posted, and students can discuss them with the teacher.

3. Course evaluation: recognises both teamwork and individual efforts. Ning recommends using bonus points to encourage students to speak out.

In her study, Ning started with introducing cooperative learning "gradually in terms of structural complexity, task difficulty, and activity duration", e.g. through simple structures such as think-pair-share. Straightforward activities like this involve "pair work requiring minimum social skills", with topics that are "closely related to students' interests and current learning materials", and the length of activities is kept relatively short. Ning recommends teachers to work together and support each other when using cooperative

learning as a new approach.

The proposed variant

The variant proposed to work with the group is presented as a structured awareness-raising sequence of steps（Table 1）which will be taken by the teachers only, together with the assistance of a mentor/facilitator. As an English-language educator, I will perform the primary role of the teachers' mentor and facilitator and deliver tasks that will cover aspects of both language learning and cooperative learning to the teachers. The premise of the task proposed in each session is similar to that of task-based learning: the university teachers will work out how to train themselves through language-learning tasks they may not be capable of fully achieving.

This variant aims to gradually allow teachers to attempt tasks that are not unlike the system already in place in their seminar group, i.e. writing a report summary（main goal）in English（language-related goal）. In the variant, however, the concept of teachers working together is explored, and teachers will work together with the mentor/facilitator, separately from the students. This variant works by 1）emphasising the role and importance of English, 2）adding tangible language-related goals and objectives, and 3）implementing clear steps, all of which are transferrable to teachers' own circumstances, i.e. their own seminar classes with their own students.

The resources for each task will be chosen based on their relevance to the group's fields of study. As the mentor/facilitator, I will conduct feedback and provide input as well as encourage reflection.

This variant is based mainly on:

- Thirteen's structure of forming a question, identifying goals, and reflecting on the developmental process
- Edge's pair-based system, its focus on individual developmental sessions, and his suggested techniques for interaction
- Ning's group-organisation steps, and her recommendations for a gradual introduction of cooperative learning.

Table 1. The Proposed Variant to Cooperative Learning

Stage	Description (M/F = Mentor/Facilitator)
1. Task result and feedback	*(This step is not present in the first session; every session [apart from the first] begins from this stage from the second session onwards.)* ・The teachers and M/F meet again and give continuity to the previous session ・Teachers present their answer to the task ・The M/F conducts feedback and discussion on the previous session's task and the response compiled by the teachers ・The M/F's own answer to the task is revealed
2. Reflection	*(This step is not present in the first session.)* ・The group discusses the task/answer ・They reflect on the previous session/task and analyse their development ・The teachers decide if they learned something that could be applied in their own setting, immediately or not ・If such an action has been set in a previous session, the group comments on its outcomes, strengths and limitations ・Teachers analyse their performance and the task and give feedback to the M/F (so that the latter is able to make adjustments/improvements)
3. Introduction	*(This is the first step when meeting the group for the first time, and it is followed by the steps below.)* ・The M/F briefs the teachers on the new session's topic (this serves as a lead-in to the task)
4. Group formation	・M/F assigns members' roles (once these roles have been defined, teachers may choose to keep their current roles)
5. Task setup	・M/F introduces a new task ・Tasks can be either a question or a set of instructions for teachers to follow
6. Identifying task goals	・M/F puts in place clear, relevant goals, to help teachers to cope with the task's requirements
7. Planning	*(This is the last stage in every session)* ・Teachers and M/F discuss further actions and arrange the next session's date/venue ・Once the task has been set and goals are in place, the session ends ・In the time between sessions, without the M/F, teachers will work cooperatively on the task

It is expected that, by finding ways to change their students' attitude, through reflection, the teachers will change their own attitudes. In other words, through their learning about cooperative learning, they may come to the realisation that a great deal of what they have discussed could be applicable to themselves. This process is expected to lead to increased teacher autonomy, which in turn is expected to result in the development of learner autonomy within the group of graduate students.

The future of this model

In the proposed variant above, several steps described in the three base models were intentionally left out. This is mostly due to characteristics and limitations within this particular context and the group's needs. Nevertheless, future iterations of this variant in

other contexts may require adapting the sequence of steps. This will depend on several factors, for example:

- An increase in the number of teachers involved may see Ning's team-formation factors or her three-step process of particular relevance.
- An increase in time available may allow for structured teamwork with group roles and a team leader, as well as group presentations and assessment.

Three outcomes are expected:

1-As the teachers become more experienced and their understanding of cooperative learning becomes more solid, they will gradually assume the responsibility for self-development and peer-development.

2-As teachers take responsibility for their own development, they will be able to perform the roles of mentor/facilitator, and apply this knowledge and help their students with using English in their academic lives.

3-Once the teachers are able to manage both a) their professional development as educators and b) their classroom and their students, I have interest in improving this model of cooperative learning (and any of its future versions) and trying this model and other versions/variations in other contexts, in order to promote educational development in tertiary educators.

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